

al. ("Porubcansky"). The rejections are respectfully traversed. The claims have never the less been amended to further clarify the invention and to eliminate any ambiguities that may have been the basis for the rejections.

The present invention is directed to crawler vehicles, such as crawler cranes, that have a plurality of crawler assemblies that are identical and/or interchangeable. In particular, independent claim 1 and the claims dependent thereon (i.e., claims 2-5 and 9) are each directed to crawler vehicle comprising a car body and a plurality of identical crawler assemblies, wherein each of said crawler assembly comprising a crawler track powered by a drive assembly and supported on a crawler frame. Independent claim 10 and the claims dependent thereon (i.e., claims 11-13) are each directed to a crawler crane having an upper works rotatably mounted on a lower works, wherein the lower works comprises a car body and a pair of interchangeable crawler assemblies. Independent claim 18 and the claims dependent thereon (i.e., claims 19-22 and 26) are each directed to a crawler vehicle comprising first and second crawler assemblies removably mounted to the first and second sides, respectively, of the car body, wherein each of the crawler assemblies are configured to also be mountable on the other (or either) side of the car body. Independent claim 27 and the claims dependent thereon (i.e., claims 28-29) are each directed to a crawler crane having a lower works comprising two independently powered crawler assemblies mounted on a car body, wherein each of the crawler assemblies are of identical design.

In addition to the above, each of the independent claims require that the drive assembly for each crawler assembly be connected to the crawler frame at a location spaced away from the center of said crawler assembly (or near an end of the crawler assembly).

As previously explained, the above-described features have several advantages over the prior art. For example, and as set forth in detail in the originally filed specification, the use of identical and/or interchangeable crawler assemblies permits either crawler assembly to be connected to either side of the vehicle or crane. This eliminates the need to design and manufacture separate right-handed and left-handed crawler assemblies, thereby simplifying and reducing the cost of manufacture. This also eliminates the number of replacement parts that need to be maintained in stock. In

other words, the vehicle operator/owner would only need to keep one crawler assembly on hand for possible repairs, as opposed to needing to keep on hand both a right-handed and a left-handed crawler assembly.

None of the above-described features or limitations are disclosed or suggested by the prior art references. For example, Helm is directed to a method of stabilizing a crawler crane. The drive assemblies are located in the center of each crawler, not spaced away from the center of the crawler (or near an end of the crawler) as required by the claims. In addition, there is no suggestion that the crawler assemblies are interchangeable or movable from one side to the other.

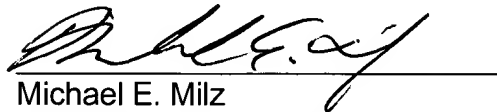
As previously explained, Porubcansky clearly discloses a crawler crane having crawler assemblies that are neither identical nor interchangeable. As best seen in FIG. 3, Porubcansky discloses a crane having a uniquely designed left-handed crawler assembly connected to the left side of the crane (the upper crawler assembly as viewed in the figure) and a uniquely designed right-handed crawler assembly connected to the right side of the crane (the lower crawler assembly as viewed in the figure). In other words, the left-handed crawler assembly is not identical to or interchangeable with the right-handed crawler assembly, and it would be impossible to mount the left-handed crawler assembly to the right side of the crane, or visa versa.

Eckert is similar to Porubcansky in that it also discloses a crawler crane having a uniquely designed left-handed crawler connected to the left side of the crane, and a uniquely designed right-handed crawler connected to the right side of the crane. In particular, the modular final drive (H) for each crawler is located at the left end (as viewed in FIG. 1) of each of the crawlers. Thus, each of the crawlers has a unique design, and cannot be interchanged with the other. Although some of the components of the drive assembly for each crawler appear to be the same, it is clear that these components are mounted or connected to each crawler in a unique fashion.

In short, none of the prior art references, either alone or if combined, disclosed the features and limitations of the present invention. Accordingly, Applicant believes that the pending claims are truly distinguishable over the prior art, and it is believed that the application is now in condition for allowance. If for any reason the Examiner is not

able to allow the application, he is requested to contact the Applicant's undersigned attorney at (312) 321-4273.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael E. Milz", is written over a horizontal line.

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